

AP English Glossary

Language & Composition and Literature & Composition

Abstract:

See *Concrete/Abstract*

Ad Hominem Argument:

Comes from the Latin phrase meaning, "to the man." It refers to an argument that attacks the opposing speaker or another person rather than addressing the issues at hand.

Allegory:

An allegory is a fictional work in which the characters represent ideas or concepts. In Paul Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, the characters named Faithful, Mercy, and Mr. Worldly Wiseman are clearly meant to represent types of people rather than to be characters in their own rights.

Alliteration:

Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds, usually at the beginning of words: the repeated "t" and "c" sounds in the sentence, "The tall tamarack trees shaded the cozy cabin," are examples of alliteration.

Allusion:

An allusion is a passing reference to a familiar person, place, or thing drawn from history, the Bible, mythology, or literature. An allusion is an economical way for a writer to capture the essence of an idea, atmosphere, emotion, or historical era, as in "The scandal was his Watergate," or "He saw himself as a modern Job," or "Everyone there held those truths to be self-evident." An allusion should be familiar to the reader; if it is not, it will add nothing to the meaning.

An allusion is a reference, usually oblique or faint, to another thing, idea, or person. For example, in the sentence, "She faced the challenge with Homeric courage," "Homeric" is an allusion to Homer's works, *The Illiad and the Odyssey*.

Ambiguity: (ambiguous)

When something is ambiguous, it is uncertain or indefinite; it is subject to more than one interpretation. For example, you might say, "The poet's use of the word is ambiguous," "to begin to discuss the multiple meanings suggested by the use of the word and to indicate that there is an uncertainty of interpretation.

Analogy:

Analogy asks a reader to think about the correspondence or resemblance between two things that are essentially different; a form of comparison in which the writer explains something unfamiliar by comparing it to something familiar. For example, if you say, "The pond was as smooth as a mirror," you ask your audience to understand two different things: "pond" and "mirror" – as being similar in some fashion. A second example is: A transmission line is simply a pipeline for electricity. In the case of a water pipeline, more water will flow through the pipe as water pressure increases. The same is true of a transmission line for electricity.

Analytical Reading:

Reading analytically means reading actively, paying close attention to both the content and the structure of the text. Analytical reading often involves answering several basic questions about the

piece of writing under consideration:

What does the author want to say? What is his or her main point?

Why does the author want to say it? What is his or her purpose?

What strategy or strategies does the author use?

Why and how does the author's writing strategy suit both the subject and the purpose?

What is special about the way the author uses the strategy?

How effective is the essay? Why?

Antecedent:

Every pronoun refers back to a previous noun or pronoun - the antecedent; antecedent is the grammatical term for the noun or pronoun from which another pronoun derives its meaning. For example, in the sentence, "The car he wanted to buy was a green one," the pronoun "one" derives its meaning from the antecedent "car."

Antithesis:

Antithesis is an opposition or contrast of ideas that is often expressed in balanced phrases or clauses. For example, "Whereas he was boisterous, I was reserved" is a sentence that balances two antithetical observations.

Apostrophe:

An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which an absent person or personified object is addressed by a speaker. For example, "love" is personified and addressed as though present in the sentence, "Oh love, where have you gone?"

Apotheosis:

The word "apotheosis" is derived from the Greek word *deify*. Apotheosis occurs in literature when a character or a thing is elevated to such a high status that it appears godlike.

Appositive:

An appositive is a word or phrase that follows a noun or pronoun for emphasis or clarity. Appositives are usually set off by commas. For example, in the sentence, "The Luxury train, The Orient Express, crosses Europe from Paris to Istanbul in just twenty-six hours," the name "The Orient Express" is the appositive for "train."

Appropriateness

See *Diction*

Argument:

Argument is one of the four basic types of prose. (Narration, description and exposition are the other three.) To argue is to attempt to convince the reader to agree with a point of view, to make a given decision, or to pursue a particular course of action. Logical argument is based on reasonable explanations and appeals to the reader's intelligence.

Assertion:

The thesis, claim, or proposition that a writer puts forward in argument.

Assonance:

Assonance is a type of internal rhyming in which vowel sounds are repeated. For instance, listen to the assonance caused by the repeated short "o" sounds in the phrase, "the pot's rocky, pocked

surface.”

Assumption:

A belief or principle, stated or implied, that is taken for granted.

Asyndeton:

Asyndeton occurs when the conjunctions (such, as, and, or, but) that would normally connect a string of words, phrases, or clauses are omitted from a sentence. For example, the sentence, "I came, I saw, I conquered" employs asyndeton.

Atmosphere:

Atmosphere is the emotional feeling – or mood – of a place, scene or event. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for example, the opening chapters convey an atmosphere of loneliness and grief.

Attitude:

Attitude describes the feelings of a particular speaker or piece of writing toward a subject, person or idea. For example, a writer can think very positively or very negatively about a subject. In most cases, the writer's attitude falls somewhere between these two extremes. This expression is often used as a synonym for tone.

Audience:

An audience is the intended readership for a piece of writing. For example, the readers of a national weekly newsmagazine come from all walks of life and have diverse opinions, attitudes and educational experiences. In contrast, the readership for an organic chemistry journal is made up of people whose interests and educational backgrounds are quite similar.

Bathos:

A false or forced emotion that is often humorous. Whereas pathos draws upon deep emotion, bathos takes this emotion to such an extreme that the reader finds it humorous rather than touching.

Beginnings/Endings:

A beginning is the sentence, group of sentences or section that introduces an essay. Good beginnings usually identify the thesis or controlling idea, attempt to interest the reader and establish a tone. Some effective ways in which writers begin essays include (1) telling an anecdote that illustrates the thesis, (2) providing a controversial statement or opinion that engages the reader's interest, (3) presenting startling statistics or facts, (4) defining a term that is central to the discussion that follows, (5) asking thought-provoking questions, (6) providing a quotation that illustrates the thesis, (7) referring to a current event that helps establish the thesis, or (8) showing the significance of the subject or stressing its importance to the reader.

An ending is the sentence or group of sentences that brings an essay to closure. Good endings are purposeful and well planned. Endings satisfy readers when they are the natural outgrowths of the essays themselves and convey a sense of finality or completion. Good essays do not simply stop; they conclude.

Cause and Effect Analysis:

Cause and effect analysis is one of the types of exposition (Process analysis, definition, division and classification, exemplification and comparison and contrast are the others.) Cause and effect analysis answers the question *why?* It explains the reasons for an occurrence or the consequences of an action.

Claim:

The thesis or proposition put forth in argument.

Classification:

Classification, along with division, is one of the types of exposition (Process analysis, definition, comparison and contrast, exemplification and cause and effect analysis are the others.) When classifying, the writer arranges and sorts people, places, or things into categories according to their differing characteristics, thus making them more manageable for the writer and more understandable for the reader.

Cliché:

A cliché is an expression that has become ineffective through overuse. Expressions such as quick as a flash, dry as dust, jump for joy and slow as molasses are all clichés. Good writers normally avoid such trite expressions and seek instead to express themselves in fresh and forceful language.

Coherence:

Coherence is a quality of good writing that results when all sentences, paragraphs and longer divisions of an essay are naturally connected. Coherent writing is achieved through (1) a logical sequence of ideas (arranged in chronological order, spatial order, order of importance or some other appropriate order), (2) the thoughtful repetition of key words and ideas, (3) a pace suitable for your topic and your reader, and (4) the use of transitional words and expressions. Coherence should not be confused with unity.

Colloquial Expressions:

A colloquial expression is characteristic of or appropriate to spoken language or to writing that seeks its effect. Colloquial expressions are informal, as *chem.*, *gym*, *come up with*, *be at loose ends*, *won't* and *photo* illustrate. Thus, colloquial expressions are acceptable in formal writing only if they are used purposefully.

Comparison and Contrast:

Comparison and contrast is one of the types of exposition. (Process analysis, definition, division and classification, exemplification and cause and effect analysis are the others.) In comparison and contrast, the writer points out the similarities and differences between two or more subjects in the same class or category. The function of any comparison and contrast is to clarify – to reach some conclusion about the items being compared and contrasted.

Conclusions:

See *Beginnings/Endings*

Concrete / Abstract:

A concrete word names a specific object, person, place or action that can be directly perceived by the senses: *car*, *bread*, *building*, *book*, *Abraham Lincoln*, *Toronto* or *hiking*. An abstract word, in contrast, refers to general qualities, conditions, ideas, actions or relationships that cannot be directly perceived by the senses: *bravery*, *dedication*, *excellence*, *anxiety*, *stress*, *thinking* or *hatred*.

Although writers must use both concrete and abstract language, good writers avoid using too many abstract words. Instead, they rely on concrete words to define and illustrate abstractions. Because concrete words affect the senses, they are easily comprehended by the reader.

Connotation / Denotation:

Both connotation and denotation refer to the meanings of words. Denotation is the dictionary meaning of a word, the literal meaning. Connotation, on the other hand, is the implied or suggested meaning of a word. For example, the denotation of *lamb* is "a young sheep." The connotations of *lamb* are numerous: *gentle, docile, weak, peaceful, blessed, sacrificial, blood, spring, frisky, pure, innocent* and so on. Good writers are sensitive to both the denotations and the connotations of words and they use these meanings to advantage in their writing. See also *slanting*.

Controlling Idea:

See *Thesis*

Contrast:

Writers often use contrasts, or oppositions, to elaborate ideas. Contrasts help writers to expand on their ideas by allowing them to show both what a thing is and what it is not. Take, for instance, images of light and darkness: a reader may better appreciate what it means to have light by considering its absence – darkness.

Deduction:

Deduction is the process of reasoning from a stated premise to a necessary conclusion. This form of reasoning moves from the general to the specific.

Definition:

Definition is one of the types of exposition. (Process analysis, division and classification, comparison and contrast, exemplification and cause and effect analysis are the others.) Definition is a statement of the meaning of a word. A definition may be either brief or extended, part of an essay or an entire essay itself.

Denotation:

See *Connotation/Denotation*

Description:

Description is one of the four basic types of prose. (Narration, exposition and argument are the other three.) Description tells how a person, place or thing is perceived by the five senses. Objective description reports these sensory qualities factually, whereas subjective description gives the writer's interpretation of them.

Dialogue:

Dialogue is conversation that is recorded in a piece of writing. Through dialogue, writers reveal important aspects of characters' personalities as well as events in the narrative.

Diction:

Diction refers to an author's choice of words. For instance, in the sentence, "That guy was really mad!" the author uses informal diction ("guy," "mad"); whereas in the sentence, "The gentleman was considerably irritated," the author uses more elevated diction ("gentleman," "irritated"). A writer's diction contributes to the tone of a text.

Division:

Like comparison and contrast, division and classification are separate yet closely related mental operations. Division involves breaking down a single large unit into smaller subunits or breaking

down a large group of items into discrete categories. For example, the student body at a college or university can be divided into categories according to different criteria (by class, by province or country, by sex and so on.)

Dominant Impression:

A dominant impression is the single mood, atmosphere, or quality a writer emphasizes in a piece of descriptive writing. The dominant impression is created through the careful selection of details and is, of course, influenced by the writer's subject, audience and purpose.

Draft:

A draft is a version of a piece of writing at a particular stage in the writing process. The first version produced is usually called the *rough draft* or *first draft* and is a writer's beginning attempt to give overall shape to his or her ideas. Subsequent versions are called *revised drafts*. The copy presented for publication is the *final draft*.

Editing:

During the editing stage of the writing process, the writer makes his or her prose conform to the conventions of the language. This includes making final improvements in sentence structure and diction, and proofreading for wordiness and errors in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation. After editing, the writer is ready to prepare a final copy.

Elegiac:

An elegy is work (of music, literature, dance, or art) that expresses sorrow. It mourns the loss of something, such as the death of a loved one.

Emphasis:

Emphasis is the placement of important ideas and words within sentences and longer units of writing so that they have the greatest impact. In general, the end has the most impact and the beginning nearly as much; the middle has the least. See also *Organization*.

Endings:

See *Beginnings/Endings*

Essay:

An essay is a relatively short piece of nonfiction in which the writer attempts to make one or more closely related points. A good essay is purposeful, informative and well organized.

Ethos:

Ethos is the characteristic spirit or ideal that informs a work. In "The Country of the Pointed Firs" by Sarah Orne Jewett, for instance, the ethos of the work is derived from the qualities of the inhabitants, who are described as both noble and caring.

Ethos also refers more generally to ethics, or values of the arguer: honesty, trustworthiness, even morals. In rhetorical writing, authors often attempt to persuade readers by appealing to their sense of ethos, or ethical principles.

Euphemism:

A euphemism is a mild or pleasant sounding expression that substitutes for a harsh, indelicate, or simply less pleasant idea. Euphemisms are often used to soften the impact of what is being discussed. For example, the word "departed" is a euphemism for the word "dead," just as the phrase "in the

family way” is a euphemism for the word “pregnant.”

Evaluation:

An evaluation of a piece of writing is an assessment of its effectiveness or merit. In evaluating a piece of writing, you should ask the following questions: What is the writer’s purpose? Is it a worthwhile purpose? Does the writer achieve the purpose? Is the writer’s information sufficient and accurate? What are the strengths of the essay? What are its weaknesses? Depending on the type of writing and the purpose, more specific questions can also be asked. For example, with an argument you could ask: Does the writer follow the principles of logical thinking? Is the writer’s evidence convincing?

Evidence:

Evidence is the data on which a judgment or argument is based or by which proof or probability is established. Evidence usually takes the form of statistics, facts, names, examples or illustrations and opinions of authorities.

Examples:

Examples illustrate a larger idea or represent something of which they are a part. An example is a basic means of developing or clarifying an idea. Furthermore, examples enable writers to show and not simply tell readers what they mean. The terms example and illustration are sometimes used interchangeable.

Exemplification:

Exemplification is a type of exposition. (Definition, division and classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect analysis and process analysis are the others.) With exemplification, the writer uses examples – specific facts, opinions, samples and anecdotes or stories – to support a generalization and to make it more vivid, understandable and persuasive.

Exposition:

Exposition is one of the four basic types of prose. (Narration, description and argument are the other three.) The purpose of exposition is to clarify, explain and inform. The methods of exposition include process analysis, definition, division and classification, comparison and contrast, exemplification and cause and effect analysis.

Writing or speech that is organized to explain. For example, if the novel you read involves a wedding, your exposition might explain the significance of the wedding to the overall work of literature.

Fact:

A piece of information presented as having a verifiable certainty or reality.

Fallacy:

See *Logical Fallacies*

Figures of Speech:

Figures of speech are brief, imaginative comparisons that highlight the similarities between things that are basically dissimilar. They make writing vivid and interesting and therefore more memorable. The most common figures of speech are these:

Simile: An implicit comparison introduced by like or as: “The fighter’s hands were like stone.”

Metaphor: An implied comparison that uses one thing as the equivalent of another: “All the world’s

a stage.”

Personification: A special kind of simile or metaphor in which human traits are assigned to an inanimate object: “The engine coughed and then stopped.”

Fiction:

The word “fiction” comes from the Latin word meaning to invent, to form, to imagine. Works of fiction can be based on actual occurrences, but their status as fiction means that something has been imagined or invented in the telling of the occurrence.

Figurative Language:

Figurative language is an umbrella term for all uses of language that imply an imaginative comparison. For example, “You’ve earned your wings” is a figurative way to say, “you’ve succeeded.” It implies a comparison with a bird who has just learned to fly. Similes, metaphors and symbols are all examples of figurative language.

Focus:

Focus is the limitation that a writer gives his or her subject. The writer’s task is to select a manageable topic given the constraints of time, space and purpose. For example, within the general subject of sports, a writer could focus on government support of amateur athletes or narrow the focus further to government support of Olympic athletes.

Foreshadowing:

Foreshadowing is a purposeful hint placed in a work of literature to suggest what may occur later in the narrative. For instance, a seemingly unrelated scene in a mystery story that focuses on a special interest of the detective may actually foreshadow the detective’s use of that expertise in solving the mystery.

General:

See Specific/General

Grammar:

Grammar is a set of rules that specify how a given language is used effectively.

Hyperbole:

Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used to achieve emphasis. The expressions, “my feet are as cold as an iceberg” and “I’ll die if I don’t see you soon,” are examples of hyperbole. The emphasis is on exaggeration rather than literal representation. Hyperbole is the opposite of understatement.

Idiom:

An idiom is a word or phrase that is used habitually with a particular meaning in a language. The meaning of an idiom is not always readily apparent to nonnative speakers of that language. For example, *catch cold*, *hold a job*, *make up your mind* and *give them a hand* are all idioms in English.

Illustration:

See *Examples*

Image:

An image is a mental picture that is conjured by specific words and associations, but there can be

auditory and sensory components to imagery as well. Nearly all writing depends on imagery to be effective and interesting. Metaphors, similes, symbols and personification all use imagery.

Induction:

Induction is the process of reasoning to a conclusion about all members of a class through an examination of only a few members of the class. This form of reasoning moves from the particular to the general.

Introductions:

See *Beginnings/Endings*

Irony:

Irony occurs when a situation produces an outcome that is the opposite of what is expected. In Robert Frost's poem, "Mending Fences," for instance, it is ironic that the presence of a barrier – a fence – keeps a friendship alive; Frost's observation that "Good fences make good neighbors" is both true and ironic. Similarly, when an author uses words or phrases that are in opposition to each other to describe a person or an idea, an ironic tone results. For example, in *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, when the speaker says, "I am glad my case is not serious!" the reader – who is also aware of just how "serious" her case is – is aware of the irony of the statement.

Jargon:

See *Technical Language*

Juxtaposition:

When two contrasting things - ideas, words or sentence elements - are placed next to each other for comparison, a juxtaposition occurs. For instance, a writer may choose to juxtapose the coldness of one room with the warmth of another, or one person's honesty with another's duplicity. Juxtaposition sheds light on both elements in the comparison.

Logical Fallacies:

A logical fallacy is an error in reasoning that renders an argument invalid. Some of the more common logical fallacies are these:

Oversimplification: The tendency to provide simple solutions to complex problems: "The reason we have inflation today is that OPEC has unreasonably raised the price of oil."

Non sequitur ("It does not follow"): An inference or conclusion that does not follow from established premises or evidence: "It was the best movie I saw this year and it should get an Academy Award."

Post hoc, ergo propter hoc ("After this, therefore because of this"): Confusing chance or coincidence with causation. Because one event comes after another one, it does not necessarily mean that the first event caused the second: "I won't say I caught cold at the hockey game, but I certainly didn't have it before I went there."

Begging the question: Assuming in a premise that which needs to be proven: "If American autoworkers built a better product, foreign auto sales would not be so high."

False analogy: Making a misleading analogy between logically unconnected ideas: "He was a brilliant basketball player; therefore, there's no question in my mind that he will be a fine coach."

Either/or thinking: The tendency to see an issue as having only two sides: "Used car salespeople are either honest or crooked."

Logical Reasoning:

See *Deduction; Induction*

Logos:

The use of reason as a controlling principle in an argument. In rhetorical writing, authors often attempt to persuade readers by appealing to their sense of logos, or reason.

A type of argumentative proof having to do with the logical qualities of an argument: data, evidence, factual information.

Metaphor:

Metaphor is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared directly, usually for emphasis or dramatic effect. For instance, the observation that "she lived a thorny life" relies on an understanding of how dangerous and prickly thorns can be. In an extended metaphor, the properties of a single comparison are used throughout a poem or prose work. For example, if you call government, "the ship of state," you could extend the metaphor by calling industry and business the "engines" of this ship and by calling the citizens of the state, "passenger" of the ship.

Metonymy:

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which something is referred to by using the name of something that is associated with it. For example, a crown is associated with royalty, and is often used as a metonym for royal authority. ("The edict issued today by the Crown forbids grazing in the commons.")

Mood:

Mood is the prevailing or dominant feeling of a work, scene or event. The opening scene of *Macbeth* in which three witches are center stage, for instance, sets a mood of doom and tragedy for the first act of the play. Mood is similar to atmosphere.

Narration:

Narration is one of the four basic types of prose. (Description, exposition and argument are the other three.) To narrate is to tell a story, to tell what happened. Although narration is most often used in fiction, it is also important in nonfiction, either by itself or in conjunction with other types of prose.

Objective / Subjective:

Objective writing is factual and impersonal, whereas subjective writing, sometimes called impressionistic writing, relies heavily on personal interpretation.

Onomatopoeia:

Onomatopoeia is an effect created by words that have sounds that reinforce their meaning. For example, in the sentence, "The tires screeched as the car zoomed around the corner," the words "screeched" and "zoomed" are onomatopoeic because the sounds they make when spoken are similar to the sounds the car makes when performing these actions.

Opinion:

An opinion is a belief or conclusion not substantiated by positive knowledge or proof. An opinion reveals personal feelings or attitudes or states a position. Opinion should not be confused with argument.

Organization:

In writing, organization is the thoughtful arrangement and presentation of one's points or ideas.

Narration is often organized chronologically. Exposition may be organized from simplest to most complex or from most familiar to least familiar. Argument may be organized from least important to most important. There is no single correct pattern of organization for a given piece of writing, but good writers are careful to discover an order of presentation suitable for their audience and their purpose.

Overview:

An overview is a brief summary of the whole work.

Oxymoron:

An oxymoron combines two contradictory words in one expression. The results of this combination are often unusual or thought provoking. For instance, if you praise a child for her “wild docility,” in essence you change the separate meanings of the words “wild” and “docility” and create a new, hybrid image.

Pacing:

Pacing is the speed of a story's action, dialogue, or narration. Some stories are told slowly, some more quickly. Events happen fast or are dragged out according to the narrator's purpose. For example, "action movies" are usually fast paced; when their pacing slows, the audience knows that the section is being given special emphasis.

Paradox:

A paradox is a seeming contradiction that in fact reveals some truth. For example, the paradoxical expression, “he lifted himself up by his bootstraps,” suggests a physical impossibility, and thus communicates a truth about the enormity of the person’s achievement.

Paragraph:

The paragraph, the single most important unit of thought in an essay, is a series of closely related sentences. These sentences adequately develop the central or controlling idea of the paragraph. This central or controlling idea, usually stated in a topic sentence, is necessarily related to the purpose of the whole composition. A well-written paragraph has several distinguishing characteristics: a clearly stated or implied topic sentence, adequate development, unity, coherence and an appropriate organizational strategy.

Parallelism:

A literary technique that relies on the use of the same syntactical structures, (phrases, clauses, sentences) in a series in order to develop an argument or emphasize an idea. For example, in the declaration, "At sea, on land, in the air, we will be loyal to the very end," the parallel phrases at the beginning of the sentence emphasize the loyalty and determination of a group of people.

Parallel structure is the repetition of word order or form either within a single sentence or in several sentences that develop the same central idea. As a rhetorical device, parallelism can aid coherence and add emphasis. Roosevelt’s statement, “I see one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished,” illustrates effective parallelism.

Parody:

Parody is an effort to ridicule or make fun of a literary work or an author by writing an imitation of the work or of the author's style.

Pathos:

A sympathetic feeling of pity or compassion evoked by an artistic work. In rhetorical writing, authors often attempt to persuade readers by appealing to the sense of pathos, or their emotions.

A type of argumentative proof having to do with audience: emotional language, connotative diction and appeals to certain values.

Person:

A grammatical term that describes the relationship of a writer or speaker to an audience by examining the pronouns that are used. Depending on the choice of pronouns, narration is said to be written in first person (I, we), second person (you, both singular and plural) or third person (he, she, it, they).

Persona:

Persona is the character created by the voice and narration of the speaker of a text. The term, "persona" implies a fictional representation or an act of disguise (that the speaker is not the author, but a created character).

Personification:

A figure of speech in which ideas or objects are described as having human qualities or personalities. For example, in the sentence, "The saddened birch trees were bent to the ground, laden with ice; they groaned and shivered in the cold winds," the trees are personified, or represented as capable of human emotion.

Point of View:

The particular perspective from which a story is told is called the point of view. Stories may be told from the point of view of specific characters or a narrator. The narrator, in turn, may be a subjective narrator (who may or may not be involved in the story), or an all-knowing (omniscient) narrator. (An omniscient narrator can tell you everything about the characters - even their inner feelings and thoughts.) Examining the person of the pronouns used can further describe point of view. Some literary works blend different points of view for emphasis and experimentation.

For example, a first person point of view uses the pronoun *I* and is commonly found in autobiography and the personal essay; a third person point of view uses the pronouns *he*, *she*, or *it* and is commonly found in objective writing.

Prewriting:

Prewriting encompasses all the activities that take place before a writer actually starts a rough draft. During the prewriting stage of the writing process, the writer selects a subject area, focuses on a particular topic, collects information and makes notes, brainstorms for ideas, discovers connections between pieces of information, determines a thesis and purpose, rehearses portions of the writing in the mind or on paper and makes a scratch outline.

Process Analysis:

Process analysis is a type of exposition. (Definition, division and classification, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect analysis are the others.) Process analysis answers the question *how*? And explains how something works or gives step-by-step directions for doing something.

Publication:

The publication stage of the writing process is when the writer shares his or her writing with the intended audience. Publication can take the form of a typed or an oral presentation, a photocopy or

a commercially printed rendition. What's important is that the writer's words are read in what amounts to their final form.

Pun:

A pun is a play on words. A pun is created by using a word that has two different meanings, or using two different words with similar meanings, for a playful effect. Shakespeare uses puns extensively in his plays; in *Hamlet*, for instance, Hamlet says he is "too much in the sun," making use of the meaning of the word "sun" and stressing his role as a "son" simultaneously.

Purpose:

Purpose is what the writer wants to accomplish in a particular piece of writing. Purposeful writing seeks to *relate* (narration), to *describe* (description), to *explain* (process analysis, definition, division and classification, comparison and contrast and cause and effect analysis), or to *convince* (argument).

Repetition:

Repetition is the reiteration of a word or phrase for emphasis.

Revision:

During the revision stage of the writing process, the writer determines what in the draft needs to be developed or clarified so that the essay says what the writer intends it to say. Often the writer needs to revise several times before the essay is "right." Comments from peer evaluators can be invaluable in helping writers determine what sorts of changes need to be made. Such changes can include adding material, deleting material, changing the order of presentation and substituting new material for old.

Rhetoric, Rhetorical Purpose:

Rhetoric is the art and logic of a written or spoken argument. Rhetorical writing is purposeful; examples of rhetorical purposes include to persuade, to analyze, or to expose.

The lines between purposes, strategies, and devices are blurry. To accomplish a rhetorical *purpose*, a writer develops a rhetorical *strategy*, and then uses rhetorical *devices* to accomplish the goal. Consider shelter as an example. If your *purpose* in constructing a shelter is to protect you from inclement weather, one *strategy* for doing this might be to build a house (other strategies might involve a tent or a cave, for instance). *Devices* would be the choices that you make as you build the house, such as whether to use wood or bricks, the number and location of doors and windows, and so on.

In the same way, to achieve a *purpose* in writing you need a *strategy* and *devices*. To use a more literary example, when arguing *to persuade the world that Americans deserved to be independent from England* (rhetorical purpose), the writers of the Declaration of Independence *refused to recognize Great Britain's legislative authority* (rhetorical strategy). To achieve this in their prose, the writers used *syntax* (rhetorical device) that presented all Americans as adhering to one idea ("We the People ...") and *diction* (rhetorical device) that affirmed their right to be independent ("self-evident" and "endowed by their Creator").

Rhetorical, or stylistic devices:

The specific language tools that an author uses to carry out a rhetorical strategy and thus achieve a purpose for writing. Some typical language devices include allusion, diction, imagery, syntax, selection of detail, figurative language and repetition.

Rhetorical Question:

A rhetorical question is a question that is asked for the sake of argument. No direct answer is provided to a rhetorical question; however, the probable answer to such a question is usually implied in the argument. "When will nuclear proliferation end" is such a question. Writers often use rhetorical questions to introduce topics they plan to discuss or to emphasize important points.

Rhetorical Strategy:

A strategy is a plan of action or movement to achieve a goal. In rhetoric or writing, strategy describes the way an author organizes words, sentences and overall argument in order to achieve a particular purpose.

Rough Draft:

See *Draft*

Satire:

To ridicule or mock ideas, persons, events or doctrines, or to make fun of human foibles or weaknesses. "A Modest Proposal" and *Gulliver's Travels*, both by Jonathan Swift, are satires of particular people and events of his time.

Selection of Detail:

The specific words, incidents, images or events the author uses to create a scene or narrative are referred to as the selection of detail.

Sequence:

Sequence refers to the order in which a writer presents information. Writers commonly select chronological order, spatial order, order of importance, or order of complexity to arrange their points.

Simile:

A simile is a commonly used figure of speech that compares the words, "like" or "as." For example, the sentence, "He drank like a camel; he was so thirsty", contains the simile, "like a camel."

Slang:

Slang is the unconventional, very informal language of particular sub-groups of a culture. Slang, such as bummed, coke, split, hurt, dis, blow off, cool and hot is acceptable in formal writing only if it is used purposefully.

Slanting:

The use of certain words or information that results in a biased view point.

Speaker:

The speaker is the narrator of a story, poem or drama. The speaker should not be confused with the author, who creates the voice of the speaker; the speaker is a fictional persona.

Specific / General:

General words name groups or classes of objects, qualities, or actions. *Specific words*, in contrast, name individual objects, qualities or actions within a class or group. To some extent, the terms *general* and *specific* are relative. For example, *dessert* is a class of things. *Pie*, however, is more specific than dessert but more general than *pecan pie* or *chocolate cream pie*.

Good writing judiciously balances the general with the specific. Writing with too many general words

is likely to be dull and lifeless. General words do not create vivid responses in the reader's mind as concrete, specific words can. However, writing that relies exclusively on specific words may lack focus and direction – the control that more general statements provide.

Strategy:

A strategy is a means by which a writer achieves his or her purpose. Strategy includes the many rhetorical decisions that the writer makes about organization, paragraph structure, syntax and diction. In terms of the whole essay, strategy refers to the principal rhetorical mode that the writer uses. If, for example, a writer wishes to show how to make chocolate chip cookies, the most effective strategy would be process analysis. If it is the writer's purpose to show why sales of American cars have declined in recent years, the most effective strategy would be cause and effect analysis.

Style:

Style is the individual manner in which a writer expresses his or her ideas. The author's particular selection of words, construction of sentences and arrangement of ideas create style.

Subject:

The subject of an essay is its content, what the essay is about. Depending on the author's purpose and the constraints of space, a subject may range from one that is broadly conceived to one that is narrowly defined.

Subjective:

See *Objective/Subjective*

Supporting Evidence:

See *Evidence*

Syllogism:

A syllogism is an argument that utilizes deductive reasoning and consists of a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion. For example:

All trees that lose leaves are deciduous. (Major premise)

Maple trees lose their leaves. (Minor premise)

Therefore, maple trees are deciduous. (Conclusion)

Symbol:

A symbol is a person, place or thing that represents something beyond itself. The beaver, for instance, is a symbol of Canada; the eagle is a symbol of America and the bear, a symbol of Russia. Literary symbols often refer to or stand for a complex set of ideas. The moors, in *Wuthering Heights*, for instance, symbolize the wild and complex relationship of Catherine and Heathcliff.

Synonym:

A word that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word is called a synonym. For example, funny is a synonym for laughable; big for large; secret for hidden; silly for ridiculous.

Syntax:

Syntax refers to the way words are arranged in a sentence. For example, the following two sentences share a similar meaning, but have different syntax, or word order: "The big blue sky beckoned her," essentially says the same thing as, "She was beckoned by the big blue sky."

Technical Language:

Technical language, or jargon, is the special vocabulary of a trade or profession. Writers who use technical language do so with an awareness of their audience. If the audience is a group of peers, technical language may be used freely. If the audience is a more general one, technical language should be used sparingly and carefully so as not to sacrifice clarity. See also *Diction*.

Tension:

Tension, in a work of literature, is a feeling of excitement and expectation the reader or audience feels because of the conflict, mood, or atmosphere of the work.

Texture:

Texture describes the way the elements of a work of prose or poetry are joined together. It suggests an association with the style of the author - whether, for instance, the author's prose is rough-hewn (elements at odds with one another) or smooth and graceful (elements flow together naturally).

Theme:

The theme of a work is usually considered the central idea. There can be several themes in a single work. In *The Woman Warrior*, for instance, Maxine Hong Kingston includes endurance, loyalty, bravery, intelligence, fortune and risk as themes variously treated and dramatized.

Thesis:

A thesis is a statement of the main idea of an essay. Also known as the controlling idea, a thesis may sometimes be implied rather than stated directly.

Title:

A title is a word or phrase set off at the beginning of an essay to identify the subject, to capture the main idea of the essay or to attract the reader's attention. A title may be explicit or suggestive. A subtitle, when used, extends or restricts the meaning of the main title.

Tone:

Tone, which can also be called attitude, is the way the author presents a subject. An author's tone can be serious, scholarly, humorous, mournful or ironic, just to name a few examples. A particular tone results from a writer's diction, sentence structure, purpose and attitude toward the subject. A correct perception of the author's tone is essential to understanding a particular literary work; misreading an ironic tone as a serious one, for instance, could lead you to miss the humor in a description or situation. See also *Attitude*.

Topic sentence:

The topic sentence states the central idea of a paragraph and thus limits and controls the subject of the paragraph. Although the topic sentence most often appears at the beginning of the paragraph, it may appear at any other point, particularly if the writer is trying to create a special effect. Also see *Paragraph*.

Transitions:

Transitions are words or phrases that link sentences, paragraphs and larger units of a composition to achieve coherence. These devices include parallelism, pronoun references, conjunctions and the repetition of key ideas, as well as the many conventional transitional expressions, such as *moreover*, *on the other hand*, *in addition*, *in contrast* and *therefore*. Also see *Coherence*.

Understatement:

When an author assigns less significance to an event or thing than it deserves, the result is an understatement. For example, if a writer refers to a very destructive monsoon as "a bit of wind," the power of the event is being deliberately understated.

Unity:

Unity is achieved in an essay when all the words, sentences and paragraphs contribute to its thesis. The elements of a unified essay do not distract the reader. Instead, they all harmoniously support a single idea or purpose.

Voice:

How the speaker of a literary work presents himself or herself to the reader determines that speaker's unique voice. For example, the speaker's voice can be loud or soft, personal or cold, strident or gentle, authoritative or hesitant, or can have any manner or combination of characteristics.

Voice is also a grammatical term. A sentence can be written in either active or passive voice. A simple way to tell the difference is to remember that when the subject performs the action in a sentence, the voice is active (for example: "I sent the letter."); when the subject is acted upon, the voice is passive (for example, "The letter was sent by me.")

Writing Process:

The writing process consists of five major stages: prewriting, writing drafts, revision, editing and publication. The process is not inflexible, but there is no mistaking the fact that most writers follow some version of it most of the time. Although orderly in its basic components and sequence of activities, the writing process is nonetheless continuous, creative and unique to each individual writer.

Zeugma:

A particular breach of sense in a sentence. It occurs when a word is used with two adjacent words in the same construction, but only makes literal sense with one of them. For example, in the sentence, "She carried an old tapestry bag and a walk that revealed a long history of injury," the word "carried" makes sense with the word "bag," but not with the word "walk," and so is an instance of zeugma

Compiled by John Brassil and Bonita Ting

Sources:

1. APCD: English Language. The College Board, 1999.
2. Eschholz and Rosa, Subjects / Strategies A Writer's Reader, 2002.

